these offices and then forwarded to the Passport Office who will issue the passports. The Scheme is already operational at 31 designated Speed Post Centres in various parts of the country.

Passport Office at Siliguri

1901. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government feel the necessity of opening a Passport Office at Siliguri, West Bengal; and

(b) if so, by when such office is going to be opened?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) No Sir. There is already a Passport Application Collection Centre (PACC) at Siliguri in West Bengal. Opening of new Passport Office is governed by certain criteria such as the location of existing offices and volume of applications from a particular region. Besides, as per the recommendations of the Standing Committee of Parliament on the MEA, there should be at least 50,000 applications for passport per year from an area where a new Passport Office is to be opened. This criterion is not met for the 6 districts of North Bengal which are being served by the PACC at Siliguri. However, steps are being taken to decentralise the collection of passport applications at the district level through the District Authorities.

(b) Does not arise.

Casual workers employed in Passport Offices

1902. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are hundreds of casual workers employed in different Passport Offices in the country;

(b) if so, whether these casual employees are performing the jobs of perennial nature;

(c) if so, whether the question of security in processing the passports may be compromised;

(d) whether the casual workers employed for more than five years are going to be regularised; and

(e) if so, by when and the contemplated mechanism in this regard?;

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. There are 539 casual workers engaged in Passport Offices all over India.

(b) The casual workers have been employed over the years to handle the increased workload and to meet the expectations of public in issuing passports on time. The demand for passports has been growing without a corresponding increase in the number of employees in the Central Passport Organisation.

(c) Casual workers are given the work of non-sensitive nature and, hence, the security is not compromised.

(d) and (e) Casual workers are being gradually absorbed against vacancies in the Group 'D' posts of the Central Passport Organisation. In addition, Ministry of External Affairs has approached the Department of Personnel & Training for approval to conduct a Limited Departmental Examination for the casual workers having requisite educational qualifications to fill-in the available vacancies in Group 'C'.

Extradition of Dawood Ibrahim

1903. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:
SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that intelligence reports say that Dawood Ibrahim is in Pakistan; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken so far or proposed to be taken through diplomatic and other means to extradite the underworld don Dawood Ibrahim, who is accused in many cases apart from Mumbai blasts?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) There are report that Dawood Ibrahim resides in